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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 005951

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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG

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SUBJECT: DECEMBER 21 PAG AGREES TO TEST MUSA QALA AGREEMENT

REF: KABUL 5751

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Richard Norland for reasons 1.4
(B) and (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: The December 21 PAG agreed to move forward to test the Musa Qala (MQ) Agreement, although several members called for flexibility in the target date established for Test 3 (January 31) and for the new Helmand Governor to first lay the groundwork with the tribal elders, since Test 3 was going to be a violation of the MQ Agreement agreed to by the elders and former Governor Daud. NSA Rassoul planned to brief President Karzai on the PAG's decision to go forward that evening. SUMMARY
Three Tests

2. (C) The three tests agreed to are: (see reftel for 14 points in the MQ Agreement)

Test 1: The MOI is to confirm to the PAG, through the IACT, that Point 3 of the agreement has been met by ensuring that law and order is being maintained in the town of MQ, within the agreement zone of 5KM from the District Center, through the use of locally recruited and properly led members of the Afghan National Auxiliary Police under overall command of the ANP Provincial Chief of Police, from January 11, 2007. This process is to be supported by the ANA and ISAF as necessary.

Test 2: ANP/ANA/ISAF are to confirm to the PAG, through the IACT, that Point 9 of the Agreement has been met by testing their right to transit the town of MQ and surrounding 5KM zone with a force from outside MQ, a few days after Test 1 has been implemented. This force should remain in the zone for a length of time sufficient to prove it has freedom of maneuver.

Test 3: Test 3 is to station within MQ a force of ANP recruited from outside MQ. Test 3 requires the prior agreement of the MQ tribal elders and the Helmand provincial governor. Before the test is implemented, President Karzai should be consulted. This test should be implemented and a

report submitted to the PAG by January 31, 2007.

Need for Flexibility

¶3. (C) During the discussion, Defense Minister Wardak stressed the need to approach the tests delicately as the overriding goal was to win the hearts and minds of the people. He called for flexibility in the target dates as firm deadlines did not compute well in the Afghan mind. NDS Chief Saleh argued for eliminating the fixed deadlines altogether since a true test would require an element of surprise. Saleh did not think that the three tests would give us a true picture of the situation and called for a "deep intel approach". He said a smart enemy would play with the tests and give us the wrong impression. CSTC-A CG Major General Durbin agreed, but said we needed to use both approaches. UK Ambassador Stephen Evans argued for more flexibility to give the new Governor time to establish himself and find out what was going on in MQ. He said the timing of Test 3 would depend on the outcome of "negotiations" between the Governor and the elders.

¶4. (C) Charge stressed that none of these considerations changed the bottom line that the PAG needed to support moving forward with all three tests. In response to NSA Rassoul's question on how to proceed, Charge argued for a formal decision to go forward in order to flush out and address issues that might arise. He noted that with each passing week without a decision we were in effect sending a signal that it was acceptable that one part of Afghanistan was not under central government authority.

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¶5. (C) ISAF POLAD Terrence Jagger, filling in for COMISAF Gen. Richards (who is quite ill with pneumonia), took issue with this characterization of the MQ Agreement, saying it had been agreed to by the GOA. ISAF was willing to support the tests but agreed with Wardak that a delicate approach was needed. If we tested the MQ Agreement too severely, Jagger said, we might trigger retaliation. ISAF recalled the situation before the MQ Agreement when UK troops were dug in and could not maneuver. ISAF said we should proceed on the assumption that the Governor and the elders will agree, but if they could not, then President Karzai would have to decide whether to override the elders.

¶6. (C) In the end, the PAG agreed to go forward with all three tests, but Test 3 would require close monitoring of interaction between the new Governor and the elders needed to pull it off. NSA Rassoul said that President Karzai would be willing to meet with the elders themselves to explain to them the PAG decision.

Comment

¶7. (C) While the UK is willing to go forward with the three tests, the British clearly do not want to create a situation where they will have to fight the Taliban again in Musa Qala. We are not comfortable that Test 3 requires the prior agreement of the MQ elders and will keep pressing Karzai to take the lead in demanding a test of the MQ Agreement regardless of the tribal leaders' decision. It almost appears as if ISAF and the UK want to postpone the inevitable confrontation with the Taliban in Musa Qala until after the transition to ISAF X has occurred in very early February, when the U.S. will be in charge. Karzai being out front will help avoid this becoming a London-Washington issue.

NORLAND